

Discussion of Strategies to Strengthen and Streamline Accreditation:

Part I. Possible Modifications to the Program Assessment Process

February 2014

Overview

This agenda item requests input from the COA about possible modifications of the Program Assessment (PA) process. The information is being presented to foster discussions that would inform how to streamline PA while maintaining the integrity of the accreditation review process.

Staff Recommendation

This is an information item.

Background

In December 2013 an information agenda item was brought to the Commission (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2013-12/2013-12-2G.pdf>) on the strengths and challenges of the Accreditation system including possible approaches to improve and streamline the system. The current accreditation system has shown to be state of the art and is comprehensive in determining whether programs are meeting the adopted Commission standards. The Biennial Report (BR) and PA process clearly fosters program improvement. However, the Commission is in the process of rethinking how to strengthen and streamline accreditation by focusing on the essentials. Information from the past Commission agenda item 2G included the following: “This situation could be significantly improved through reducing and refocusing the scope of applicable program standards-...which would in turn reduce the necessary scope of program documents submitted for review. The Commission could also work with stakeholders to define appropriate page limits, matrices to capture program information in summary form, and other strategies to make this component of the accreditation system more manageable for institutions, volunteer reviewers, and the Commission.” This agenda item is requesting input from the COA to inform the streamlining of PA.

Since the implementation of the new system beginning in 2007-08, the merits and challenges of the system have become clear and Commission staff has begun exploring next steps in improving the process. The current system is driven by lengthy and complex standards which require extensive supporting documentation resulting in program documents that can be as many as 1000 pages in length. It has become clear that the PA process is incredibly time and resource intensive for the submitting cohorts as well as the volunteer readers. As focus turns towards the quality of candidates completing programs it is possible that the current PA format could be streamlined.

Program Assessment occurs in year four of the accreditation cycle and examines each approved credential program individually. The PA submission includes a clear description of how a

program is currently operating and states how the program is meeting all parts of the standard. The required information includes:

Part I: The program narrative which describes how the program is meeting each of the program standards.

Part II: Includes the candidates' current course of study and provides readers with the documentation that links the narrative response to the program's current practices.

Part III: Provides documentation that supports the program's BR and includes information about assessment tools used by the institution to determine candidate competence and program effectiveness, including rubrics, training information, and calibration activities that the program reports on in the BR.

Trained Board of Institutional Reviewers (BIR) members review each approved educator preparation program and determine whether the programs are preliminarily aligned to the relevant standards or if more information is needed. Results from the PA process inform the Site Visit that will take place in year six of the accreditation cycle.

Discussion of Possible Options to Streamline Program Assessment

The COA may wish to discuss the following items to help guide staff in developing streamlined processes for Program Assessment.

- 1) Establish a page or character limit for the PA narrative. Perhaps a page limit aligned with the number of standards included in the program. Eventually create a CTC website for posting all PA submissions. The site would have automatic character/page limits established--similar to what occurs with NCATE/CAEP submissions.
- 2) Determine how the Biennial Report 4-6 key assessments would fit into the streamlined PA process.
 - a. Matrix with links to the key assessments?
 - b. Additional separate section specifically for the 4-6 key BR assessments?
- 3) Consider how PA might look for an institution that has appropriately addressed all standards in their last PA submission. For example, if feedback from PA reviewers indicated all standards were found to be preliminarily aligned plus all standards were deemed fully met by the Site Visit team, an alternate review with much less narrative and documentation might be acceptable. Once institutions are ready to submit their next PA, could the institution/program identify areas of substantive change through an extended summary and matrix? (No lengthy narrative required unless concerns at the site visit were identified or standards at previous PA reviews were not preliminarily aligned) Should the program be eligible to complete an abbreviated PA process if they meet established eligibility requirements? If the program received accreditation without any stipulations

after the visit how or/would that impact the specific requirements for their PA submission? Keep in mind that not all cohorts/programs have completed year four PA submission requirements.

- 4) Identify/underline selected phrases and sentences from the current program standards that would require a narrative response and linked documentation. The additional standards/components would be addressed in a matrix-only format that linked to syllabi or specific documentation.
- 5) Currently new programs approved through Initial Program Review (IPR) between October of year 3 and year 4 are exempt from PA. Could we consider extending the exempt time period to December of year 2 and December of year 4 (an additional year) with the requirement of a program summary and a 5-page (or any other set number of pages) write up on what has changed since approval? This submission could be written in a “what we learned and improved” summary and include standards impacted by the changes. If additional courses are added to the program, new syllabi would also be included.
- 6) Would it be feasible to have a modified PA review process for all Clear programs? (General Education Clear and General Education Induction, Special Education Clear Induction, Professional Clear Administrative credential.)
 - Use a shortened matrix form
 - Include a 5-6 page summary that goes beyond the current required program summary and identifies areas that would be specific to the institution’s program and any substantial changes since the last review
 - What additional criteria would be necessary?

Current Challenges and Future Questions:

- 1) The length of PA submissions and the added appendices present a challenge for reviewers as they attempt to locate the appropriate documentation to support preliminary alignment with the standards.
- 2) Fewer volunteers are available to commit to the PA process.
 - The 4-year average is 10 readers/session (5 reading pairs)
 - Reader pairs cover 1-3 documents/session, with the majority of reader pairs only reading 1 document/session.
 - Currently we receive approximately 120 documents per year which leaves at least 50 documents to be reviewed remotely.
- 3) Institutions have indicated that they find it very cumbersome to assemble a document that readers can easily review. How can this be addressed?

- 4) How would changes to PA impact the current Site Visit process? Could the Site Visit still remain as program sampling if PA became a Matrix-based process?
- 5) Would the first PA submission from a new program (after IPR) be modified or remain similar to the current PA process?

Next Steps

Based on the COA discussion and guidance, a streamlined process for Program Assessment will be developed and presented at the April COA meeting.